The Archaeological Wealth of Ancient Thrace

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Whoever travels in Bulgaria today has noticed the countless grass-covered Thracian burial mounds that dot the plains and hilly regions. Here, as all over Europe, they are the most important sources for the study of ancient cultures. Besides the rich and interesting finds, there are stone tombs within these mounds that reveal something of the history of Thracian architecture. These burial mounds have produced jewelry worn by women, arms borne by men, the ornaments of their cuirasses and shields and the trappings of their horses, vessels made of clay, bronze, glass, silver, and gold, and countless other articles used in daily life.

The treasures hidden in the earth are of no less importance. Composed of wonderful gold and silver vases, of coins in circulation in Thrace, and sometimes of jewels and ornaments made of precious metals, they all complete the picture of the development of Thracian culture.

The Thracian settlements are being carefully studied. However, in this country, as in the Eastern kingdoms, it is the palaces of the kings that would provide a fuller picture of the achievements of Thracian architecture. The greater number of them, however, still escape the archaeologist's eye; the only residence of Thracian rulers discovered so far is Seuthopolis, capital of one of the Thracian kings, Seuthes III, who reigned in the period of Alexander the Great and Lysimachus.

In offering a selection of Thracian wealth it should be borne in mind that it does not come from the whole of ancient Thrace, but only that part which is now within the present boundaries of Bulgaria. It originates therefore from an area of only 110,000 sq. km., yet it shows a variety not to be found in any other country, and which is due largely to the proximity of Thrace to the great cultures of the first millennium B.C. This variety was the fruit of the inner development of Thrace, which, lying as it did between several cultures totally different in character from one another, adopted elements from them all. For Thrace, which was a European country, had a culture that was not very different from those of the neighboring countries of central and western Europe. However, Thrace was very near Greece and was divided from Asia Minor by only two straits, neither of them wider than a big river. Persia, the most highly cultured country of the East, which had absorbed the cultures of almost all the peoples she had conquered (Assyrians, Babylonians, Urartians, Phrygians, Lydians, and Carians, and even the Bithynian Thracians), lay beyond those two narrow straits. On the other hand, the Greeks surrounded her on all sides. Their colonies sprang up along the entire coast of Asia Minor, of southern Russia, and of Thrace herself. Lastly, we should not forget the Scythians of southern Russia, to whom research workers assign a considerable contribution to the development of Thracian culture. Situated on the outskirts of four very different cultures, Thrace could most easily pass from within the range of one into the range of another, accepting elements from all these cultures. Moreover, when it is borne in mind that in the last three centuries of the first millennium B.C. the Celts and, after them, the Romans penetrated deep into the Balkan Peninsula, we cannot expect a steady and calm development in Thrace, such as has been observed in western or central Europe.

The Thracian material and spiritual culture, highly original and richly colored by fruitful interrelations, is the result of many centuries of dramatic historical development, and can be considered one of the most beautiful and brilliant stones in the mosaic of civilizations in the period of the slave-owning society.

Map on page 74

1

Thrace before the Thracians

Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age

The first rich culture in Thrace came into being in the sixth, fifth, and fourth millennia B.C. The forms of its artifacts were original, and seem to have occurred spontaneously without evidence of any earlier developments in the country. This culture belonged to an unknown and mysterious people. Scholars cannot explain it, but ascribe to it a slow and regular growth. This culture appeared throughout almost the entire country at the same time.

It is possible, however, to find certain similarities between Thrace and Asia Minor during this period. In Asia Minor the walls of forts were made of stone and those of houses of lath and plaster; in Thrace both types of walls were made of lath and plaster. The burial mounds were similar in both regions. Local pottery, gracefully made from its very beginnings, was often brightly colored and richly ornamented. In Thrace, as in Asia Minor, images of the mother-goddess predominated in idols made of clay or bone, whether as pregnant women, women in labor, or mothers.

About the end of the fourth millennium, this culture reached its zenith. Models of houses were made of pottery, and the first stone sculptures and sickles (figure 4) made of antlers, with flint cutting edges, were developed. These examples, too, have close parallels in Asia Minor.

It often happens that accepted opinions about a given society, previously thought to be primitive and backward, are seriously upset by the discovery of a necropolis such as the one near Varna dating back to the end of the fourth millenium B.C. The richness of its treasures, especially the considerable quantity of gold jewelry, indicates that these were the tombs of rulers.

At a later date, about 2800 B.C., during the Bronze Age, far-reaching changes took place. These changes, connected with a strongly centralized rule, contributed to the disappearance of all traces of this culture.

The decline that followed does not permit us to present many works of the Early and Middle Bronze ages. Here we are restricted to the Late Bronze Age, which was already part of the Thracian culture.

2

1 · Female idol. Bone, height 15 cm. (5⅞ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Lovets, Stara Zagora district. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. I-C3-135

2 · Head of an idol. Pottery, height 7 cm. (2¾ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Gabarevo, near Kazanluk. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2958

3 · Anthropomorphic rhyton. Pottery, height 15 cm. (5⅞ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Gabarevo, near Kazanluk. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2957

4 · Sickle. Antler and flint, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Late Chalcolithic, about 3000 B.C., Karanovo, near Nova Zagora. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3143

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The Varna Treasures

These treasures belong to the Late Chalcolithic Age (3200-3000 B.C.) and were among the finds from the necropolis of that date near Varna. They were discovered in Tombs 1 and 36 of the necropolis, where digging has been in progress since 1972, and are shown to the public for the first time in this exhibition. We are most grateful to the director of the excavation, Research Fellow Ivan S. Ivanov, for permission to show these objects, only part of this unique find. Digging is still in progress at the site, and so far forty-four tombs have been brought to light, in many of which there are similar articles. Some of the tombs have no skeletons and were probably symbolic burials, or cenotaphs. This necropolis offers surprising information about a highly organized society, with the beginnings of social differentiation, existing in the Balkan Peninsula at the end of the Chalcolithic Age.

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5 · Bracelets. Gold, diameters 9.6 cm. (3¾ in.); weights 268 gr., 194.32 gr. Archaeological Museum, Varna, Inv. Nos. I-1512, 1513

6 · Horned animals. Gold, heights 3.7 cm. (1 7/16 in.), 5.8 cm. (2¼ in.); weights 6.74 gr., 11.70 gr. Archaeological Museum, Varna, Inv. Nos. I-1634, 1633

6

Thracian Art in the Era of the Legendary Kings

Late Bronze Age, 1600-1200 B.C.

In Greek legends the history of the Achaean kings of Mycenae is interwoven with that of the Thracian kings. This has led many scholars, who consider the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as a source for the earliest history of the people of the Aegean, to believe that the culture discovered in Thrace belonged to the Thracians mentioned in these legends.

In the age of Orpheus, of Maron, or of Diomedes, whose horses tore strangers to pieces, Troy dominated the Hellespont. To the east of that city lay the kingdom of the Hittites; to the west, in the southern part of Macedonia, lay the land of the Phrygians; while the Scythians and the Paeonians had not yet settled in central Russia and in Macedonia. In this period, as yet only slightly known, the life of the Thracian tribes did not differ greatly from that of the other peoples in the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula.

Pottery was the most widespread art, and the distant influence of Mycenae is to be felt in it; but Thracian pottery differs from Mycenaean both in form and in ornamentation. The proportions are rather heavy, and the vessels are ornamented with incisions (see figure 8) and encrustations of a white paste; these characteristics also apply to vessels shaped like birds and to idols in the form of women (figure 7), who wear long dresses like those of Mycenaean figures. The distinct features of both countries are once more found in the western Balkan Range, in the Carpathians, and along the middle and lower reaches of the Danube. The pottery of southern and western Thrace is similar in character, but it is more primitive, as, in general, the entire culture of the regions in the northwest was calmer than in the south and the east—a fact that may be due to the way of life.

The bronze weapons of the Thracians of this period are found throughout the Danubian Plain, where two-edged swords with a very long point were used. The rapier with a cross-shaped handle, which made thrusting possible, was also known.

The rapiers found in Thrace are of the same quality as those discovered in Greece, and it was thought for a long time that they had been imported from Mycenae. However, aside from articles common to Thracians and

7 · Female idol. Pottery, height 11.5 cm. (4½ in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Orsoya, near Lom. Museum of History, Lom, Inv. No. 20183

8 · Two-handled vessel. Pottery, height 8.3 cm. (3¼ in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Orsoya, near Lom. Museum of History, Lom, Inv. No. 20188

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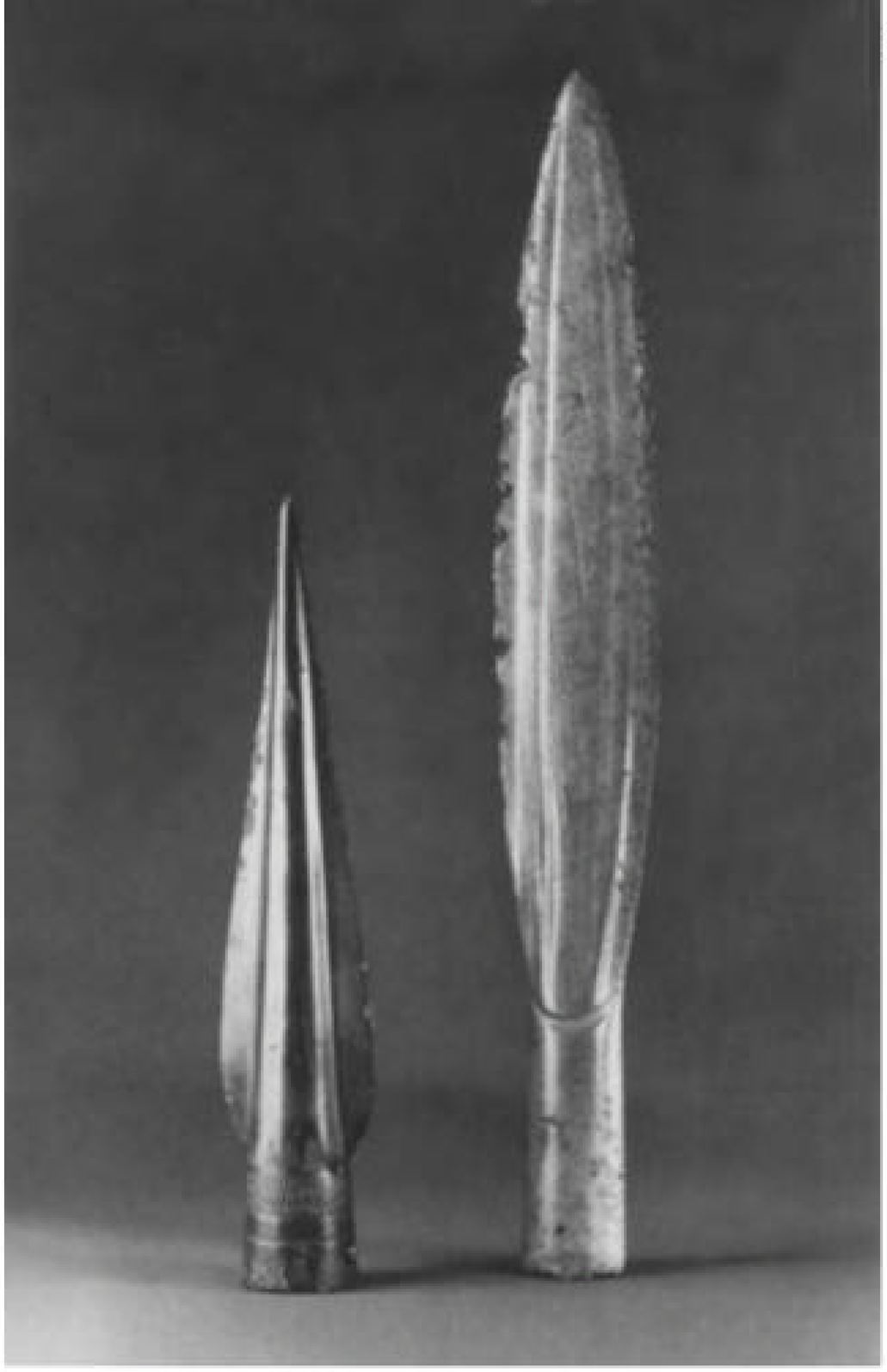

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Greeks in the epoch described by Homer, Thracian art was often of a local character, as are the matrices (figure 10) for the casting of bronze weapons discovered at Pobit Kamuk, near Razgrad. Improved ornamentation indicates they were intended for Thracian chieftains, and shows how the technique of the master bronze workers had been perfected to satisfy the wishes of their clients. On the other hand, the discovery of these matrices, which were probably deliberately buried, is evidence of the incursion into Thrace of a population that surely did not possess such highly perfected articles. Some articles cast in similar matrices were found in Romania, and therefore provide evidence of a local art. Another treasure, that of Vulchitrun, demonstrates the skill of the craftsmen better still, not only in cast metal but also in wrought metal.

9 · Spearheads. Bronze, heights 19.2 cm. (7 9/16 in.), 29.1 cm. (11 7/16 in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Dolno-Levski, near Panagyurishte, and Sarantsi, Sofia district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 617, 2755

10 · Matrices for casting a scepter. Stone, length 25 cm. (9 7/8 in.). Late Bronze Age, 1500-1200 B.C., Pobit Kamuk, Razgrad district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5086

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11 · Cup and vessel. Gold, heights (with handles) 18.3 cm. (7 3/16 in.), 22.4 cm. (8¾ in.); weights 919 gr., 4395 gr. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3193, 3192

The Vulchitrun Treasure
[Color plate 1]

This treasure is a masterpiece of the Thracian goldsmith's art. Composed of a large, two-handled vessel, a triple vase, four cups, and seven lids, for a total weight of 12.5 kg. (about 27½ lbs.), it is the most important find of gold articles to come to light in Thrace.

Some archaeologists date it to the end of the Early Iron Age, others to the Bronze Age. More recent discoveries of the Iron Age, as well as two finds in Sofia and Belogradets, near Provadia, prove that metal was not so finely worked in the Iron Age; on the other hand, the gold studs with conical heads, which rivet the handles of the large vessel (figure 11), and the studs of the cups (figure 11) are reminiscent of those found on Cretan-Mycenaean swords. In addition, the silver inlays on the lids also offer evidence in support of the Late Bronze Age date.

The most characteristic feature of this treasure, besides the simplicity of its forms, is the sparing use of ornament, which is limited to the grooved handles. This shows a sense of proportion not to be found in later articles. However, the Thracian goldworkers were quite able to make intricate articles, as is apparent in the triple vessel (figures 12, 13). The electrum handle in the form of a trident and the small silver tubes connecting the elements prove that the master who cast them worked with the same precision as a goldsmith. The craftsmanship of the large lids (color plate 1) reveals the same skill: under the handles a bronze pad, which continues in a bronze circle, provides a firm hold, and an openwork cross strengthens the handles.

In this period the difference in quality between pottery and metalwork is proof of the power of the aristocracy, which had craftsmen at its disposal well able to satisfy its requirements and refined taste. Perhaps originally hidden in the walls of the palace of a Thracian chieftain, this treasure also indicates that political power was linked with religious power, for such a find was, indeed, intended for ritual use.

Originally this treasure must have been far greater. The gold lids should have belonged to seven vessels, all of them larger than the two-handled lidless one. The number of large vessels was probably considerably greater than that of the small ones, which are shaped as though they were intended for pouring rather than for drinking. These cups were used to fill the big vessels with liquid, which was then poured into the cups of each individual, a ceremony that accompanied the mystical rites of the Thracians. The triple vessel, whose strange form proves the ritual nature of the find, must have been used to mix three different liquids.

In composition the Vulchitrun treasure may be compared to another one, which bears an inscribed dedication to the Thracian deity Pyrmerulas. However, the latter is of a much later date, since it belongs to the period of the Roman Empire.

12 · Triple vase. Gold, width 23.9 cm. (9⅜ in.); weight 1190 gr. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3203

13 · Back of the triple vase

Thrace in the Early Iron Age

Geometric Art

Little is known about Thrace in this period. No name of a king or a chieftain, and no exact records of any events have come down to us in myths and legends. Only burial mounds remain in large numbers, for at that time they were very widespread. The archaeological name for this period is the Early Iron Age, and it can also be defined as the era of megaliths, or of geometric art.

No matter how the invasions may have taken place in the twelfth century B.C., it is obvious that the farther to the southeast they reached, the more important they became. These movements from Europe into Asia passed through Thrace in great waves. The Thracian population experienced times of hardship, and some had to flee the broad plains and take refuge in the mountainous regions of Sakar and Strandja, in the Rhodopes, and in the eastern sections of the Balkan Range.

Huge stone tombs appeared in the southeastern regions when these invasions came to an end. They were dolmens built of very large slabs. The walls of these tombs, made of one or two slabs, surrounded a burial chamber, which could be from 2 to 2.5 m. (6½-8 ft.) long, with a single slab as a cover. Sometimes a passage *(dromos)* and an antechamber led to the burial chamber, over which were constructed a false vault and a mound. In the southeast, rock-cut tombs were also found. All these tombs were intended solely for the aristocracy of the tribe. They were robbed in antiquity, in the Middle Ages, and in still more recent times, so that today only pottery is to be found in the dolmens and the rock tombs. But the richest archaeological discoveries were made in northwestern Thrace, where the work of craftsmen was also intended for the aristocracy. The chief finds in women's tombs were fibulae, while in the men's there were weapons and horse trappings.

As in Greece, pottery of this period in Thrace returned to old techniques and old decorative designs. However, the execution was simpler, sometimes even clumsy. The principal ornament was composed of circles with a dot in the middle, connected by triangles and other geometrical motifs, loops, or spirals. These designs were usually painted and often encrusted with white paint and at times were also worked in relief. Metalwork did not reach the perfection of former ages. In eastern Thrace the fibulae went back to models from the Ionian Islands, while in western Thrace those in vogue came from Greece and Macedonia. The small bronze figures of animals made in this period are characteristic; in the west they imitated models from Greece and Macedonia, while in the east, they had elements very reminiscent of forms from Asia Minor. Certain royal insignia, known in Asia Minor, also appeared among the Thracians under the influence of the East; most notable is the iron scepter, whose upper part, made of bronze, is in the form of an axe (figure 14) and is ornamented with heads or animal figures, which in Thrace included rams, bulls, goats, stags, horses, and birds. Whereas in the East axes had wooden handles,

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14 · Ritual axe. Bronze, height 10.6 cm. (4⅛ in.). 10th-7th centuries B.C., provenance unknown. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 744

15 · Kantharos. Pottery, height 12 cm. (4¾ in.). Beginning of the Early Iron Age, Krivodol, Vrasta district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3258

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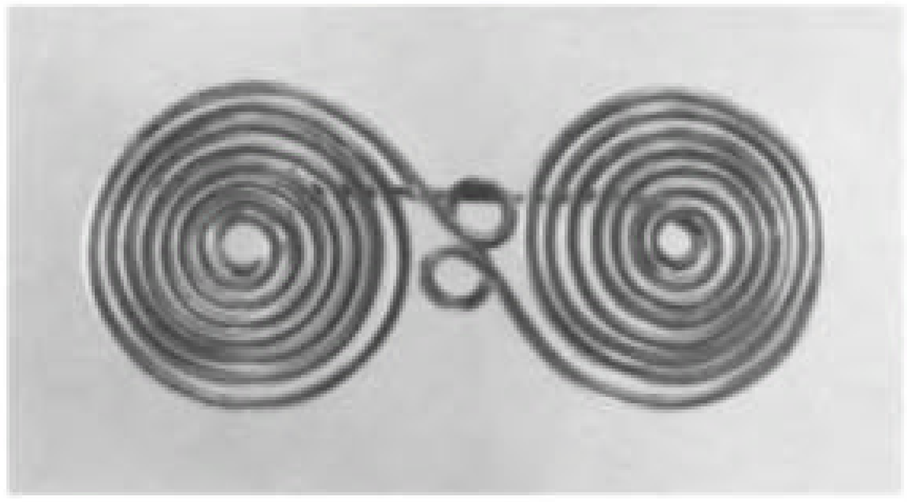

16 · Headstall. Bronze, height 7 cm. (2¾ in.). 6th century B.C., Sophronievo, Vrasta district. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. 757

17 · Stag. Bronze, height 16 cm. (6¼ in.). 10th-7th centuries B.C., Sevlievo region. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 747

18 · Bowl. Gold, diameter 24 cm. (9⁷⁄₁₆ in.). About 700 B.C., Kazichane. Museum of History, Sofia, Inv. No. 3014

19 · Fibula. Bronze, length 14.5 cm. (5¾ in.). 8th-7th century B.C., Vidin. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 120

20 · Ornamental sheath. Gold, length 20.1 cm. (7⅞ in.). 8th-7th century B.C., Belogradets, Varna district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2865

in Thrace some of them were used as amulets and were simply synthesized geometrical forms. This type of axe spread far to the northwest and has been found in the cemeteries at Hallstatt (Austria).

Other royal insignia of this period, also mentioned by Homer in connection with Caria and Lydia, are the headstalls decorated with appliques that were known throughout the northern part of the Balkan Peninsula. These appliques, cast in bronze, sometimes took the form of little crosses, circles, or rosettes. The only headstall with animal ornamentation is the one from Sophronievo (figure 16). The statuette of a stag from Sevlievo (figure 17) should be mentioned among the animal figures: its symmetrical antlers end in stylized animal heads, the summarily executed heads of birds, a motif that was later to pass into Thracian art, and from there to the Scythians.

Goldwork of this period is represented by several pairs of earrings in the form of open rings and by bracelets. Few other examples have survived, but what has come down to us is particularly important, such as a gold bowl (figure 18), dated about 700 B.C., from Kazichane, a suburb of Sofia. Its simple ornamentation is reminiscent of pottery, heavy and clumsy both in form and decoration: the ribs are deep and irregular and at some distance from one another. This is curious, when we remember that a large number of pottery vessels are thought to be imitations of metalwork.

Development of Thracian Art in the Middle Iron Age

525 to 280 B.C.

In the mid-sixth century B.C. Thrace attained a high degree of development, as is evidenced by the finds from many burial mounds. Her culture was at its zenith, but at the same time underwent far-reaching changes.

The Greeks founded a great number of colonies, until the whole Thracian coast was in their hands. Here they built forts, temples, theaters, and rich houses; they made statues and reliefs and vessels of bronze, gold, and silver. Under the influence of the Orient, they wore garments made of expensive fabrics and gold jewelry and introduced filigree work. A rich inhabitant of Thrace could easily buy Greek works of art, either in the cities on the coast or in the large centers of continental Greece. Greek coins also made their appearance in the Thracian marketplaces along with these objects.

On the other hand, the shores of Asia Minor were in the hands of the Persian Achaemenids, who ruled these territories until Alexander the Great conquered them. Everything was adapted to the Persian monetary system. Thrace could not fail to be influenced by this Eastern power, and even the Greek colonies on her shores extended their contacts with the East.

In the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. trade flourished between the interior of Thrace and the towns of Cyzicus on the Propontis in Asia Minor, Appollonia on the European shores of the Black Sea, and Parium, as well as the Thracian Chersonese on the Hellespont. All of the treasures of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. found in Thrace contain coins of these places.

At that time, through her trade with the Persians and the Greeks, Thrace emerged from the general isolation of the previous period. The Thracian burials are a good illustration of this change. In them has been found much gold jewelry, as well as alabaster vessels, glass, and classical pottery.

At the end of the fourth century B.C. imports from Greece increased greatly, and at the same time many works were made by Thracian master craftsmen under the influence of the Orient.

The Mounds of Douvanli
[Color plates 2, 3]

Of the numerous mounds near the village of Douvanli, in the Plovdiv district of southern Bulgaria, about fifty have been excavated to date. They belong to various periods from the sixth to the first centuries B.C. Five of the mounds proved to be the greatest discoveries in Thracian archaeology, and the articles found in them could well fill a large museum. They were the richest mounds, and also the oldest, since they date back to

21 · Mug. (Illustrated here more than twice actual size.) Silver, height 8.6 cm. (3⅜ in.); weight 236 gr. Greek type and workmanship; a name, perhaps that of the owner, is inscribed around the neck. Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1518

22 · Necklace. Gold, weight 54.7 gr. Greek workmanship. 460-450 B.C., Arabadjiyska mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1646

the end of the sixth and to the fifth centuries B.C.

In all three women's burials, the Moushovitsa, Arabadjiyska, and Koukova mounds, were found wonderful gold ornaments made by Greek workshops in Thrace, together with pectorals of rare forms, necklaces, and massive bracelets, which are very impressive for their rich ornamentation and attest to the great wealth and luxurious taste of their owners. Two other, later mounds, Golyamata and Bashova, are the burials of men. Helmets and cuirasses were found in the men's burials, while all the mounds contained a large number of vases.

In antiquity, the tribe of the Bessoi inhabited the territory of the present-day village of Douvanli. The oldest finds were discovered in the Moushovitsa mound.

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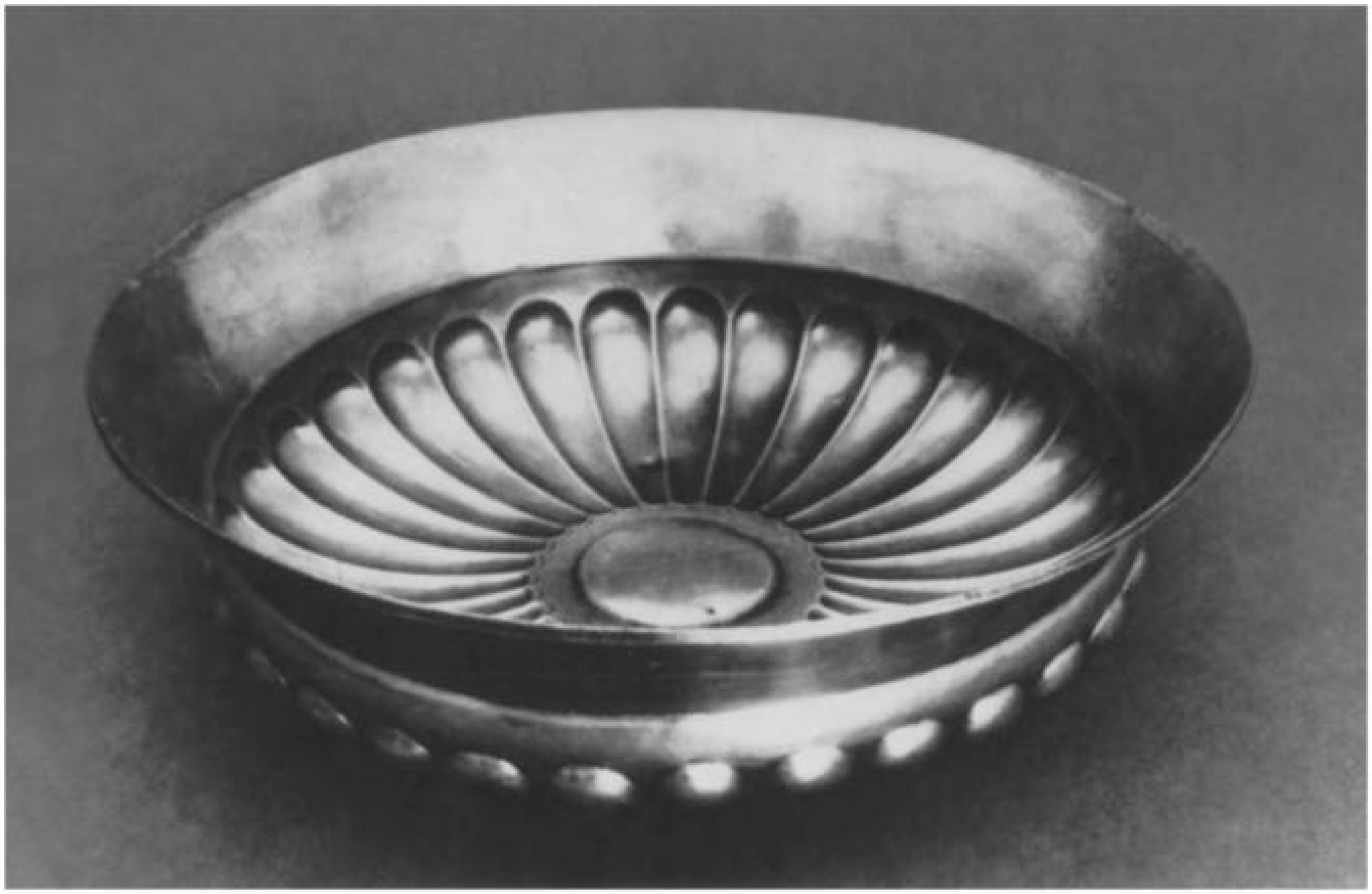

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23 · Earrings. Gold, heights 3.6 cm (1⅜ in.); weight of both about 26 gr. Greek workmanship. End of the 6th century B.C., Moushovitsa mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1538

24 · Pectoral. Gold, length 25.9 cm. (9⅞ in.); weight 65.5 gr. End of the 6th century B.C., Moushovitsa mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1531

25 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 26 cm. (10¼ in.); weight 120 gr. Early 5th century B.C., Koukova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1275

26 · Bracelets. Gold, diameters 9 cm. (3½ in.); weights 257.10 gr., 298.25 gr. Early 5th century B.C., Koukova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 6128, 6189

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27 · Cuirass. Bronze, height 35 cm. (13¾ in.); height of semicircular part 28 cm. (11 in.). 450-400 B.C., Rouyets, near Turgovishte. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6168

28 · Helmet. Bronze, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). 5th century B.C., Sborishte, near Nova Zagora. Museum of History, Nova Zagora, Inv. No. 1152

29 · Belt. Silver gilt, length 31 cm. (12¼ in.). 5th-4th century B.C., Lovets, Stara Zagora district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6617

Chance and Isolated Discoveries

End of the 6th century and the 5th century B.C.

[Color plates 3, 4]

Numerous articles found in various mounds in the course of chance discoveries reveal the splendor surrounding the Thracian aristocracy at the end of the sixth and during the fifth centuries B.C. Such are the finds at Tatarevo, Turnichene, Svetlen, Rouvets, Pastousha, Pesnopoi, Sadovets, Staro Selo, Chervenkova Mogila, near Brezovo, Mazrachevo, Daskal Athanassovo, Ezerovo, and Skrebetno. It is also evident that the kinds of military equipment (helmets and cuirasses) and jewelry (rings, torques, bracelets, and earrings) found at Douvanli were widespread throughout the Thracian area (see figures 30-32).

The presence of the same elements of grave furniture is a characteristic feature of all these tombs. Changes took place only at the turn of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., when, more particularly, hydriai (water jars) and helmets disappeared, being replaced by other vases and another type of armor.

Two objects of particular importance among the chance finds, and those which are difficult to date with any certainty, should be mentioned here: a belt (figure 29) from Lovets and a matrix (color plate 4) from Gurchinovo that was used in ornamenting beakers. Beakers with this kind of decoration have not been found in Bulgaria, but did come to light in another region of Thrace, now in Romania, as part of a treasure found at Agighiol. It contained a silver beaker, whose ornamentation can be compared to that of the Gurchinovo matrix. The principal motif is a stag, with antlers ending in the shape of animal heads. The stag is used in connection with other animal motifs.

The belt from Lovets has a type of ornamentation often found on gold pectorals from Anatolia: a composition of hunting scenes symmetrically placed on both sides of a plant motif. This motif is influenced by an Oriental model, the symbol of the Tree of Life.

29

Color Plates

Plate 1

Of gold, inlaid with silver in a wave pattern, these large lids show the refined technique of the early Thracian craftsman. They are part of an astonishing treasure—thirteen gold objects together weighing more than 27½ pounds—discovered accidentally at Vulchitrun. Lid in foreground: diameter 37 cm. (14½ in.); weight 1850 gr. Lid in background: diameter 37 cm. (14½ in.); weight 1755 gr. Late Bronze Age, 13th-12th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3196, 3197

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30 · Phiale. Gold, diameter 14.5 cm. (5¾ in.); weight 80.95 gr. 5th century B.C., Daskal Athanassovo, Stara Zagora district. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-Cz-1132

31 · Bracelet. Gold, diameter 10 cm. (3$^{15}/_{16}$ in.); weight 41.5 gr. 5th century B.C., Skrebetno, near Gotse Delchev. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3167

32 · Ring with movable bezel. Gold, diameter 2.7 cm. (1$^{1}/_{16}$ in.); weight 31.3 gr. Engraved with a Thracian inscription in Greek letters. End of the 5th century B.C., Ezerovo, near Purvomai. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5217

Plate 2

The silver-gilt lion's head above as well as the medusa head and the Nike (color plate 3) originally ornamented a cuirass; they came from Golyamata, the earliest burial of a man at Douvanli. This plaque, one of five from the same matrix, was locally made. Height 5.5 cm. (2⅛ in.). Mid-5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1652

The silver amphora at the left came from the Koukova mound, Douvanli, which dates back to a time when Thracian lands between the Rhodopes and the Aegean were under Persian rule. Made by an Achaemenid craftsman, it was undoubtedly a royal gift to accompany the woman buried in the tomb. Perhaps she was a hostage for a peace treaty between the Bessoi tribe and Persian troops occupying the neighboring territories. Silver, partly gilt, height 27 cm. (10⅝ in.). Early 5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6137

A Greek work from the Propontis (Sea of Marmara), the silver rhyton at the right is influenced by Persian art, notably in the palmette and lotus ornaments at the top. The hooves, mane, and trappings of the horse are gilt. An inscription in Greek letters at the lower end of the rhyton perhaps gives the name of the owner. Height 20.6 cm. (8⅛ in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1517

The helmet above once had cheek-pieces attached by hinges. The palmette on the frontlet, the scrolls on either side, and the winged lion-griffin with its serrated mane are wholly Greek in style. Bronze, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Second half of the 5th century B.C., provenance unknown. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4013

Plate 3

The silver-gilt medusa head above reveals some of the features of the fifth century B.C., such as more even teeth, carefully combed hair, and a less monstrous nose; it may be the product of a local workshop less familiar with the more ferocious Greek prototypes.

Below, Nike, goddess of victory, stands in a quadriga, which has trace horses facing out and pole horses facing in. In her right hand she holds a victory wreath. The frontal chariot and the rendering of horses and goddess are pure Greek. Although the plaque is dated in the mid-fifth century B.C., the profile heads of Nike and the horses go back to archaic Greek convention of the sixth century B.C.

Medusa plaque: width 9 cm. (3½ in.). Nike plaque: silver gilt, height 6.5 cm. (2½ in.). Mid-5th century B.C., Golyamata mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. Nos. 1653, 1562

The helmet at the right is of the standard Corinthian type. Bronze, height 20.9 cm. (8¼ in.). End of the 6th century B.C., Chelopechene, Sofia district. National Museum of History, Sofia, Inv. No. 547/63

Erich Lessing

Plate 4

The highly stylized lion on the gold pectoral at the left is surrounded by a border of peltas, the shields used by Thracian foot soldiers. Width 13.8 cm. (5⅜ in.) ; weight 19.60 gr. Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Bashova mound, Douvanli. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 1514

Not intended as a unified composition, the bronze matrix above combines animal motifs that could be used individually for repoussé work: a large stag whose antlers end in birds' heads, a chimera, and a bird with birds'-heads talons ; below, a lion, a boar, and a bull facing left; a lion facing right ; and two sitting lions, who have been turned 90 degrees, on either side of a reclining stag. Length 29 cm. (11⅜ in.). 5th century B.C., Gurchinovo, Shoumen district. District Museum of History, Shoumen, Inv. No. 23

Plate 5

Found in a bronze vessel at Letnitsa were a number of silver and silver-gilt plaques decorated in a special rather rustic style based on local artistic traditions and influenced by the East. The one at the upper left depicts the *hieros gamos*, a ritual marriage of two deities. On the middle plaque, a mounted warrior wears the topknot described by Herodotus as typical of the Thracians. Below, a wolf attacks a deer. Heights 4.5-5 cm. (1¾-2 in.). 400-350 B.C., Lovech district. District Museum of History, Lovech, Inv. Nos. 604, 585, 582

This silver rhyton is part of a luxury drinking set found at Borovo in 1974. Its design of ivy twigs, which also appears on another rhyton, the procession of silens, maenads, and satyrs, headed by Dionysos and Ariadne, on a pitcher (figure 42), and the satyr's-head handles on a dish unite the find in a single theme connected with the cult of Dionysos. The rhyton is inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Etbeos. Height 20.2 cm. (8 in.). First half of the 4th century B.C., Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse, Inv. No. II 358

Plate 6

A rich tomb at Vrasta yielded the skeleton of a man, that of a woman with the elaborate earrings illustrated at the far right, and those of horses with fine trappings, two still harnessed to a chariot. The grave goods included this magnificent greave and small gold mug.

The mug has a handle in the shape of a square knot, known as the knot of Herakles. The body is decorated with two winged quadrigas, thought to represent the chariot of Apollo. While much detail has been lavished on the horses' harnesses, the chariots are summarily executed. The mouth of the mug is beaded, and the lip is decorated with a kymation; another kymation is around the base. Palmettes encircle the shoulder, and one separates the quadrigas. The mug's shape and part of its decoration (knot-handle, kymation on top) are Greek, but the figure style represents local taste.

The top of the greave, covering the kneecap, is decorated with the head of a woman, following the Greek tradition in which tops of greaves were sometimes rendered as gorgoneia, or medusa heads. Two locks of her hair are snakes that terminate in ferocious lions; two lion-headed snakes, emerging from snail shells, form a clavicle; the stylized calf muscles are snakes terminating in the heads and wings of *kete*, or sea monsters. (Because of its fragility, the greave is shown in the exhibition in facsimile; the photograph at the right is that of the original.)

The disk-shaped upper part of the earrings is decorated with tendrils and rosettes, and looped to it is a crescent-shaped pendant with spirals and rosettes. Suspended from the crescent are beads; attached to the upper rim are sirens with outspread wings.

Mug: height 9 cm. (3½ in.); weight 240 gr. Greave: silver and gold, height 46 cm. (18⅛ in.). Earrings: length 7.5 cm. (2 15/16 in.); weight 37 gr. 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. Nos. 391, B-231, B-60

Erich Lessing

Plate 7

The cup of this silver deer's-head rhyton is decorated in relief with three satyrs cavorting against the background of an ivy wreath. Height 11.2 cm. (4⅜ in.), weight 49.5 gr. Early 4th century B.C., Rozovets, Plovdiv district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 49

A rich find at Vurbitsa included the silver cup at the right, photographed on a mirror. Its neck is decorated with an engraved gilt ivy wreath and the lower part of the body with tongues. On the bottom is a rosette. Height 8.7 cm. (3⅜ in.); weight 168.5 gr. Second half of the 4th century B.C., Shoumen district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 51

The iron pectoral above is silver-plated, with traces of gilding, and was part of an iron cuirass. It was found in a beehive tomb near Mezek, in the burial chamber of a man. The superior quality as well as the individual decorative elements, which are arranged in zones, point to Greek workmanship. Width 21 cm. (8¼ in.). 350-300 B.C., Maltepe mound, near Mezek, Haskovo district. Archaeological Museum. Sofia, Inv. No. 6401

Plate 8

The objects on these pages show the wide variety of styles found in Thrace during the fourth century B.C. The rich ornament of the silver shield plaque at the left includes fantastic animals from the Achaemenid repertory, a winged lion and an eagle-griffin, who are placed above and below a boss surrounded by a circle of beads. There is also a decorative device frequently found in Thracian art: the stylized spirals on the animals' shoulders and thighs. From the same tomb group, the silver plaque at the right depicts Herakles wrestling the Nemean lion in a composition that is typically Greek.

Shield plaque: height 32 cm. (12⅝ in.). Herakles plaque: diameter 8.6 cm. (3⅜ in.). 350-300 B.C., Panagyurishte. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. Nos. 3555, 3559

On this silver plaque a lion attacks a stag that has collapsed, a motif that was extremely widespread in the fourth century B.C. and has been found from Etruria in the northwest to Anatolia in the east. It may have entered the repertory of Greek artists originally in the "Orientalizing" period of the seventh century B.C. The motif also appears on painted vases and in sculpture. Silver, partly gilt, length 8.7 cm. (3⁷⁄₁₆ in.); weight 102 gr. End of the 4th century B.C., Loukovit. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8216

Plate 9 (overleaf)

One of two magnificent gold stag's-head rhyta from the Panagyurishte treasure (color plates 9-14). Height 12.5 cm. (4¹⁵⁄₁₆ in.); weight 505.5 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3198

Plate 10

Of all the finds in Bulgaria, the Panagyurishte treasure is justly the most famous. Its sheer weight in gold—almost 13½ pounds—is in itself most impressive, but its rich decoration, interesting iconography, superb workmanship, and excellent preservation all add to the uniqueness of the discovery. Since the inscribed weights are expressed in the monetary unit of Lampsakos, on the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles, it may be assumed that the nine vessels were made there.

This splendid amphora-rhyton is of a shape that was originally Persian, but the artist has turned the handles into two opposing centaurs, one of which is shown in the detail above, and has liberally covered the entire body with figural scenes. The main subject, framed above and below by floral ornament, is an attack on a palace (see color plate 11). On the bottom are shown Silenus and the infant Herakles strangling snakes and two heads of Negroes, whose mouths form the openings of the rhyton; arranged opposite each other, they allow the wine to flow in two streams. Perhaps the amphora-rhyton was used to drink blood brotherhood or in treaty ceremonies. Gold, height 28 cm. (11 in.); weight 1695.25 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3203

Plate 11

In the scene at the left, from the amphora-rhyton illustrated on the preceding page, a warrior threatens an old man, who peers through a half-open gate. The warrior's powerful body shows a fine grasp of anatomy; his tensed muscles and the expressive faces of both figures are indicative of an advanced state of Hellenistic art.

The libation bowl, or phiale, from Panagyurishte shares with others of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. a decoration of concentric circles around a central boss, the omphalos. Here, in three tiers, are seventy-two Negro heads above a circle of twenty-four acorns. The space between the heads is ornamented with palmette crosses. Gold, diameter 25 cm. (9⅞ in.); weight 845.7 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3204

Plate 12

The cup of this rhyton in the shape of a goat's protome is decorated with a scene of Hera enthroned, flanked by Artemis and Apollo. On the back, fully visible because the rhyton has no handle, is Nike (shown in the detail above). The names of all the deities are inscribed in Greek letters. Gold, height 14 cm. (5½ in.) ; weight 439.05 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 3196

Plate 13

Animal-head rhyta were among the many themes introduced into Thracian metalwork by Greek workshops. Above is one of the two stag's-head rhyta from Panagyurishte (the other is illustrated on color plate 9). The subject on the cup is the Judgment of Paris, who is shown seated, as are Hera and Athena. Aphrodite, to whom Paris awarded the prize, is standing near the handle that terminates above in the form of a lion and below in a female head. Their names are inscribed; Paris is given the name by which he is sometimes identified —Alexandros. On the other stag's-head rhyton the scenes are of Herakles fighting the hind of Cyreneia and Theseus fighting the bull of Marathon.

On the ram's-head rhyton at the left, Dionysos and Eriope, whose names are inscribed, are depicted seated, flanked by two maenads. Its handle also terminates in a lion above and in a head below.

Stag's head: gold, height 13.5 cm. (5½ in.); weight 674.6 gr. Ram's head: gold, height 12.5 cm. (4⅞ in.); weight 505.05 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. Nos. 3197, 3199

Plate 14

Three of the rhyta from Panagyurishte are in the shape of a female head and all three share the same handle finial, a sphinx resting its front paws on the rim of the vessel. One of the women wears an exotic helmet decorated on both sides with a griffin, and this element of armor has led to the assumption that they are Amazons. Left: height 20.5 cm. (8⅛ in.) ; weight 387.3 gr. Above: height 22.5 cm. (8⅞ in.) ; weight 466.75 gr. Right: height 14 cm. (5½ in.) ; weight 460.75 gr. Turn of the 4th-3rd centuries B.C. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, 3202, 3201, 3200

Plate 15

On the bronze helmet at the left, the deities Hermes, Apollo, Athena, Nike, and Ares are shown in an arcade, each under an arch, while Poseidon appears on the cheekpieces. Height 19.7 cm. (7¾ in.). 1st century A.D., Bryastovets (Karaagach), Bourgas district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6176

Gold spirals such as the one above were worn in the hair. This coil, thought to represent a dragon, was inlaid at both ends with stones; only one remains. Length 6.1 cm. (2⅜ in.). Mid-3rd century B.C., Nessebur. District Museum of History, Bourgas, Inv. No. 1336

Herakles fighting the Nemean lion on the silver plaque at the right is surrounded by six other animals or monsters, arranged in a zone: pairs of lion-griffins, winged lions, and lions. Diameter 17.8 cm. (7 in.). 1st century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-132-7

Plate 16

One of four found at Kroumovgrad, the silver plaque at the left shows in its medallion the bust of a bearded man. His wild, unkempt appearance evokes the iconographic tradition of giants in battle with the gods; and since two of the other plaques from this find depict busts of Herakles and Athena, the four may be related in subject. Diameter, 7 cm. (2¾ in.). 2nd century A.D. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3747

Above, a gold coin struck in Caracalla's reign (A.D. 198-217) is mounted on a pendant suspended from a triple chain of twisted gold wire. Length 46.6 cm. (18⅜ in.); weight 91.99 gr. A.D. 249, Nikolayevo, Pleven district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4774

The helmet at the right is in two parts: a silvered-iron mask representing a man's face and an iron top and back made to look like hair, banded by a silver laurel wreath. Similar helmets were found in the European and Asian provinces of the Roman Empire, those found in Thrace being close to examples from Asia Minor. Presumably such helmets were worn on dress occasions and not in battle. Height 22 cm. (8⅝ in.). 1st century A.D., Plovdiv. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 19

Plate 17

After the conquest of Thrace, the Romans established their religion in urban centers, but in more isolated areas traditional deities were still honored. At the right is a terracotta statuette of the Thracian god of health, Telesphorus, wearing a typical native outer garment with a hood.

The purely Thracian "Horseman" or Thracian "Hero" was a strange deity who combined the characteristics of many gods, among them Asklepios, Apollo, and Dionysos. Besides being the subject of votive tablets—where during Roman times he was usually represented as a hunter—he was often depicted in bronze, as he is below. Later on, Christians frequently reinterpreted the "Hero" as Saint George.

Telesphorus: height 17 cm. (6¾ in.). 2nd century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. C3-612. Horseman: height 7.5 cm. (3 in.). Droumhor, Kyustendil district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 7046. Horse: height 7.8 cm. (3 in.). Chavka, near Momchilgrad. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6231

Mounds from the End of the Fifth to the Third Centuries B.C.

The only group of mounds of this period to have been discovered and systematically studied is at Mezek. In other cases the objects were obtained from chance finds, which did not yield an archaeological context. It should, moreover, be noted that despite the existence of the Odrysian kingdom (mainly in the southeast), the richest finds were discovered in the north on both sides of the Balkan Range. The splendor of Douvanli should therefore be attributed to tribes that were detached from the kingdom of the Odrysians or had never been subjected by it. The crisis that this kingdom experienced at the end of the fifth and in the early fourth centuries B.C. is very clearly shown by these archaeological finds.

Another interesting fact revealed by these excavations is the widespread distribution of bronze and silver plaques for horse trappings (figures 33-35, 37). Although some archaeologists explain this by the presence of the Scythians, it should be noted that there were no Scythians in southeastern Thrace, which bordered on Asia Minor, or in the northeast, the region nearer to the Scythians. No matter how strange it may seem, it is precisely in northwest Thrace that a large number of these plaques were found. Phialai (figure 38) and vases made of silver were most widespread, and ornaments for shields appeared at the same time. These articles were ornamented with animal motifs, treated in a style close to that of the Scythians, but preserving a certain purely Achaemenid character. In contrast to the Geometric period, the animals most frequently depicted were lions, bears, wolves, griffins, and lion-griffins, not counting other imaginary animals with the bodies of snakes, which are quite strange, and alien to old Thracian art. Human figures were also shown, and sometimes we come across a whole composition in which a deity in the form of a horseman occupies the central place. Fighting animals and animal motifs are depicted, motifs whose complexity sometimes makes interpretation difficult, and these works are close to Scythian art. Certain distinctive features nonetheless reveal the originality of Thracian art.

33 · Lion's-head headstall. Silver, height 4.7 cm. (1 13/16 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Brezovo, Plovdiv district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 1712

34 · Harness plaque. Bronze, height 5 cm. (2 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Orizovo, near Chirpan. Archaeological Museum, Plovdiv, Inv. No. 2584

35 · Harness plaque. Silver, height 5.5 cm. (2 1/8 in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Sredna Mogila, near Mezek, Haskovo district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6799

33

34

35

Animal ornamentation is not a phenomenon peculiar to Thracian or Scythian art. The Greeks who lived in the coastal cities of Thrace introduced many Oriental elements into their metalwork under the influence of the Achaemenids. The rhyton (a drinking vessel) in the form of a human or an animal head appeared in Thrace at the same time, and also much jewelry, brought from Greek workshops, which was ornamented with animals: heads of lions, bulls, or horned lions. The Greek craftsmen tried to achieve an even greater stylization, and so did the Thracian craftsmen; for example, muscles and wrinkles around the mouth and eyes were treated in a very abstract manner.

In brief, the finds from this period indicate influences from the East, which increased and culminated with the campaigns of Alexander the Great in Asia.

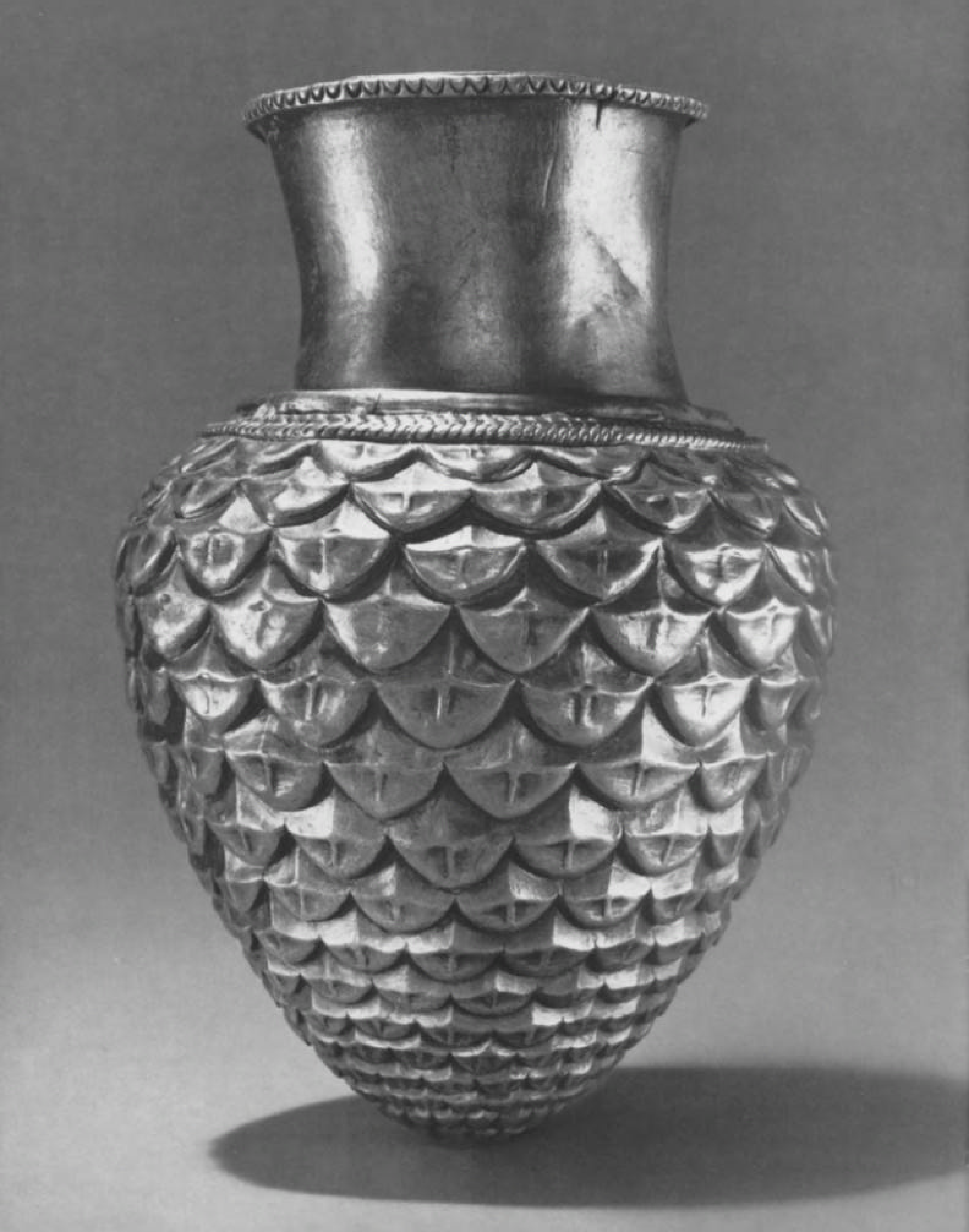
37

37 · Headstall. Silver, height 7.4 cm. (2⅞ in.). Turn of the 5th-4th centuries B.C., Sveshtari, Shoumen district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 3159

36 · Helmet. Bronze, height 23.7 cm. (9⅜ in.). Thracian type with movable cheekpieces. 4th century B.C., Kovachevitsa, near Gotse Delchev. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2676

38

38 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 10.5 cm. (4⅛ in.). Early 4th century B.C., Vladinya, Lovech district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8150



Rich Burials of the Fourth Century B.C.

[*Color plates 5-8, 15*]

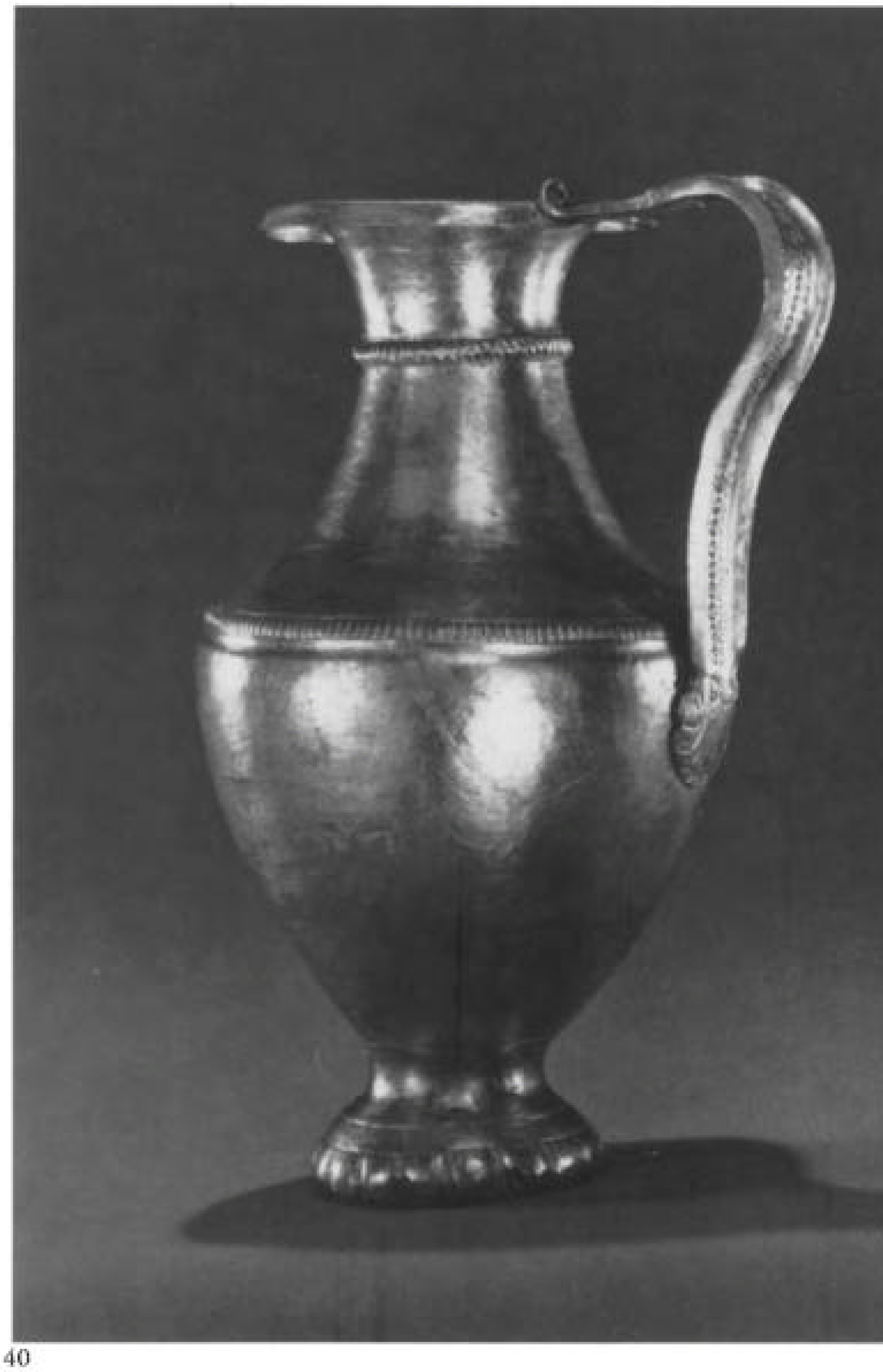
The large finds of Letnitsa, Alexandrovo, and Branichevo contain many similar articles, allowing us to assign these treasures to the same period, to which we can also assign Mogilanska mound in Vratsa. In all of them, particularly Vratsa and Branichevo, silver phialai were found that are inscribed with the names of the Thracian kings Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and Amadokos (359-351 B.C.), upon whose orders they were made to be offered to the persons buried in the tombs. The names of the master craftsmen who made the phialai are also found on them: Engeiston at Alexandrovo (see figure 41), Etbeos at Vratsa, and Teres at Branichevo.

The Panagyurishte Treasure

[*Color plates 9-14*]

Its weight in gold (6.1 kg., almost 13½ lbs.) is not the only impressive feature of this treasure; the original form and ornamentation of the vessels are equally so. The treasure consists of a phiale (color plate 11) and eight rhyta (color plates 9-14); one is in the form of an amphora, while the others are shaped like the heads of women and animals and the protome of a goat. These vessels have openings at the base through which the liquid flowed and which had to be stopped when the vessel was filled. The amphora has two openings, making it possible for two persons to drink from it at the same time, and it was perhaps intended for blood-brotherhood or treaty ceremonies. These articles seem to have been made by several craftsmen at Lampsakos, on the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles; the inscriptions give the actual weight of some of the vessels in terms of staters of Lampsakos.

The subjects and ornamentation (an attack on a palace, the Judgment of Paris, and bacchantes) belong to the Hellenistic repertory; also in accordance with the style of this period, the craftsman placed the figures in tense attitudes and emphasized their muscles and strong facial expressions.



40

41

39 · Vase. Silver, height 14 cm. (5½ in.). 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound, Vrasta. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. B-66

40 · Pitcher. Silver, height 13.9 cm. (5½ in.). End of the 4th century B.C., Loukovit. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8212

41 · Phiale. Silver, diameter 13.5 cm. (5⁹⁄₁₆ in.); weight 133.7 gr. Inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Engeiston. Early 4th century B.C., Alexandrovo, Lovech district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 2241

42

43

42 · Pitcher. Silver, height 18.2 cm. (7⅛ in.). Inscribed with the name of the Thracian king Kotys (382-359 B.C.) and that of the craftsman Etbeos. First half of the 4th century B.C., Borovo, Rousse district. District Museum of History, Rousse

43 · Rein ring. Bronze, about 8 cm. (3⅛ in.) 350-300 B.C., Malkata Mogila, near Mezek. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 6411, 6412

44 · Phiale with the head of Aphrodite. Silver, partly gilt, diameter 10 cm. (3 15/16 in.). 380-350 B.C., Mogilanska mound, Vrasta. District Museum of History, Vrasta, Inv. No. B-68

45 · Plaque with eagles and griffins. Silver gilt, height 2.8 cm. (1⅛ in.). 400-350 B.C., Letnitsa, Lovech district. District Museum of History, Lovech, Inv. No. 594

44

45

The Decline of Thracian Culture

3rd to 1st centuries B.C.

In 280 B.C. upon the death of Lysimachus, the last great ruler of Thrace, Thracian culture began to decline. The conflicts between this ambitious general of Alexander the Great and the Thracian kings and the wars against the other successors had exhausted the economic and military resources of Thrace. This opened the way for a new conqueror to enter the country: the Celts of western Europe who ravaged the Thracian regions and the Greek cities of the coast. In 216 B.C. their rule was overthrown. In the same year the Romans reached the Adriatic coast of the Balkan Peninsula. After engaging the Macedonians (who had tried to restore their rule over Thrace in three prolonged and consecutive wars), and occupying Macedonia in 164 B.C., the Romans invaded Thrace, first aiding the Odrysians and then the other Thracian tribes. In the second half of the first century B.C., when the Thracian tribes in the northwest had been subjected, the Odrysian kingdom became a Roman protectorate that preserved its independence until A.D. 49.

This period can be called the epoch of great invasions from the West. There are few monuments connected with it: the campaigns of the Macedonians, the Celts, and the Romans devastated the region, and the mounds of the third to first centuries B.C. offer only ordinary articles. The fibulae, swords, and shield plaques are identical with those of central Europe and Italy. North of the Balkan Range, as in southern Russia, occur the so-called Sarmatian monuments, the treasures of Galiche and Yakimovo. The coins found in them are imitations of Macedonian coins and of those struck in Thasos.

47

48

46 · Phalera, or chest ornament, in a silver bowl. Bowl: diameter 14.7 cm. (5¾ in.). Phalera: silver, partly gilt, diameter 8 cm. (3⅛ in.). 1st century B.C., Yakimovo, Mihailovgrad district. Mihailovgrad Museum, Inv. Nos. 38, 40

47 · Phalera. Silver gilt, diameter 15.8 cm. (6⅜ in.). 2nd-1st century B.C., Galiche, near Oryahovo. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5877

48 · Phalera. Silver gilt, diameter 18.3 cm. (7⅛ in.). 2nd-1st century B.C., Galiche, near Oryahovo. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 5876

50

49 · Helmet mask. Bronze and iron, height 23 cm. (9 in.). Second half of the 1st century A.D., Stara Zagora. District Museum of History, Stara Zagora, Inv. No. II-C-1116

50 · Saltcellar. Silver, height 10.4 cm. (4 1/16 in.); weight 106.44 gr. A.D. 249, Nikolayevo, Pleven district. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 4766

The Roman Period

[Color plates 15-17]

After the Roman conquest, Thrace was divided into three provinces, Macedonia, Moesia, and Thracia. Urbanization increased, and the Thracian cities possessed almost all the usual features of Roman cities: architecture on a large scale, sculpture, paintings, and the applied arts, the latter always influenced by Hellenistic art. The religion of the conquerors was also established in the urban centers, while the Thracian deities, displaced and isolated in solitary areas, were only worshiped in the inaccessible mountains. Rich cemeteries with tombstones, marble statues, and painted tombs surrounded the cities. But, in general, the Thracians remained true to the old burial customs and preserved their burial mounds right down to the Christian era.

In the mounds of the Roman period, helmet masks (color plate 16, figure 49) and plaques (color plate 15) of the types found in Stara Zagora (the second half of the first century B.C.) came to light, objects that had always been considered Eastern in character. However, most typical of this period are the Thracian chariots, which were discovered in the mounds with horses in rich trappings still harnessed to them. The articles from Shishkovtsi (figures 51-53) give us an idea of the ornamentation of these chariots, of which more than fifty have been found.

Most of the art originating in Roman Thrace is quite similar to that found in all the Roman provinces of Europe: portraits on gravestones, reliefs and statues, bronze vessels, glass and silver vases, weapons, silver and gold jewelry. However, there is a group of articles found only in Thrace: votive tablets depicting Zeus (Jupiter), Hera (Juno), Asklepios (Aesculapius, god of medicine) and Hygieia (goddess of health), Sylvanus, Dionysos (Bacchus), Pan, satyrs and maenads, Herakles (Hercules), and other Greek and Roman deities.

The most interesting are the reliefs that depict a horseman (figure 54), the Thracian "Hero," a strange local deity who combined the characteristics of many gods (Asklepios, Zeus, Dionysos, Sylvanus, Apollo, Pluto, and Mithras). The "Hero" is also portrayed in bronze (color plate 17), and there is no doubt that these figures,found only in Thrace, were locally made.

Another frequently treated theme is that of the three nymphs, depicted as goddesses of humility and fertility, whose images are similar to those of the Three Graces.

The Roman period is represented in the exhibition by typically Thracian monuments. Gold and silver jewelry was then also very plentiful in Thrace; the pieces shown are from the Nikolayevo treasure (figure 50, color plate 16).

51

51-53 · Chariot ornaments from Shishkovtsi, Kyustendil district. Pectoral with the head of a maenad: bronze and silver gilt, height 19 cm. (7½ in.). Chariot part with maenad heads: bronze and silver gilt, height 21 cm. (8¼ in.). Ornament with bust of Herakles: bronze and silver gilt, height 22 cm. (8⅝ in.). 2nd-3rd century A.D. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 7992

52

54 · Votive relief. Marble, height 30 cm. (11¾ in.). Kaspichan. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 1322

55

Coins

55 · At the left is a coin from the Derroni tribe showing a man with a pointed beard and broad-brimmed Macedonian hat driving an ox-drawn chariot. In the center is a symbol of the sun; on the reverse is a *triskelion* (three legs). Silver decadrachm, diameter 3.5 cm. (1⅜ in.). 6th-5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 8739.

At the right, on a coin from an unknown tribe, Silenus kneels with a maenad in his lap; on the reverse is an incised swastika. Silver stater, diameter 1.9 cm. (¾ in.); weight 5 gr. 5th century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Sofia, Inv. No. 10473-54